



“From the challenges of consumers’ perception to challenging the perception – A European communication perspective”.



Jean-Baptiste Boucher  
Communications Director



Euroopa Maaelu Arengu  
Põllumajandusfond:  
Euroopa investeeringud  
maapiirkondadesse

**copa**\***cogeca**  
european farmers      european agri-cooperatives





## Mission

To ensure a viable, innovative, competitive EU agriculture and agri-food sector guaranteeing food security to half a billion people throughout Europe.



## Objective

Promoting European farmers and agri-cooperatives views to **influence** EU decision-making process and public opinion.



# copa

european farmers



# cogeca

european agri-cooperatives

Created in **1958**

**22 million** European farmers and family members

**60** full members from the EU Member States and 36 partner organisations

Created in **1959**

**22,000** European agricultural cooperatives

**35** full members from the EU Member States, 4 affiliated members and 36 partner organisations



In **1962**, a joint Secretariat was created, making it one of the largest and most active organisations in Brussels for the past **60** years.

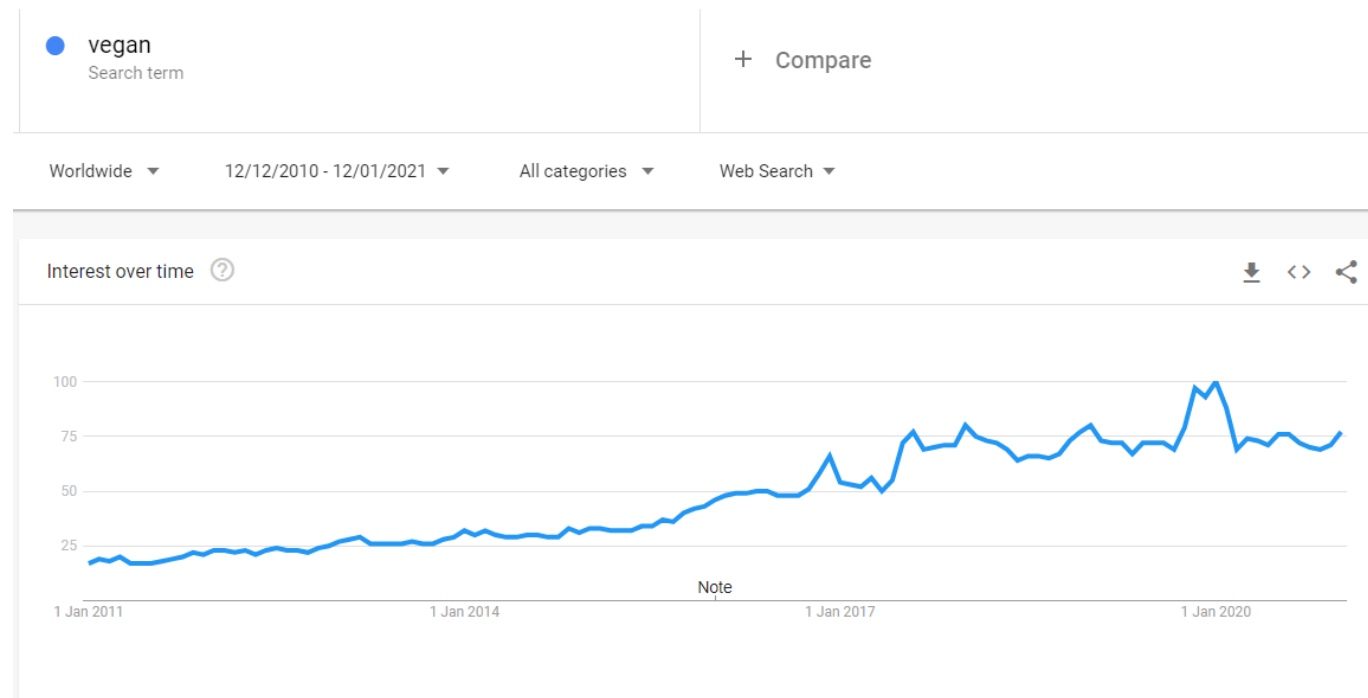
# Foreword

- \* **Focus of this presentation:** How to communicate in a state of permanent criticism? As an example the EU livestock debate
- \* **Objective:** understand the issues at stake without making value judgements
- \* **Part 1: “From the challenges of consumers’ perception ...**  
*Understanding the concerns (theory part)*
- \* **Part 2 ...to challenging the perception”**  
*Proposing some concrete answers based on best case practices (practical part)*



# Introduction - The game changer in Europe ? The animal welfare concern – and the related communication (1/4)

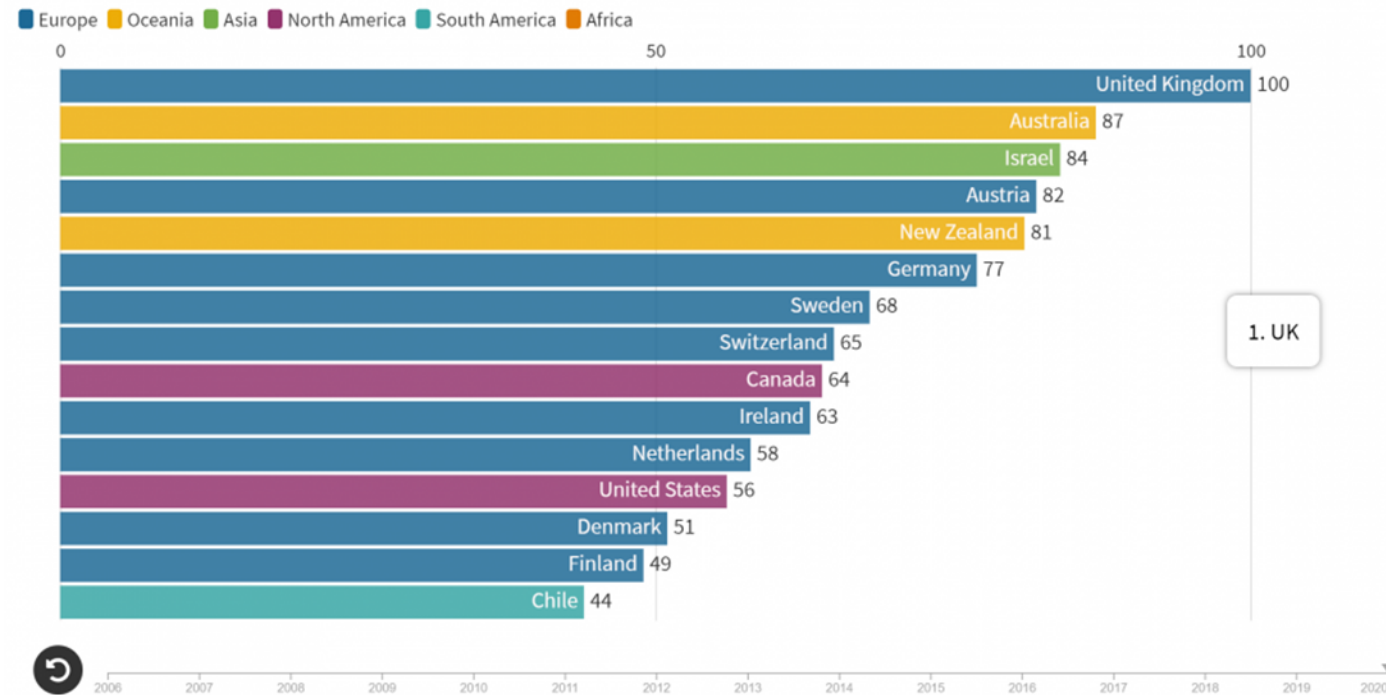
\* Veganism and critics towards traditional livestock production is a rising trend on social media and in the media...



# The game changer in Europe ? The animal welfare concern – and the related communication (2/4)

\* ... especially in western countries and more precisely northern european countries

Where Veganism is Most Popular Around the World



Chef's Pencil Analysis of Google Trends Data





## The game changer in Europe ? The animal welfare concern – and the related communication (2/4)

- \* At EU level those questions are at the center of many of our debates especially since the appointment of the new Commission in 2019.
- \* The launch of the Green Deal has turned some of those claims into policy objectives.
- \* Over the past 2 years we spoke about livestock reduction, ban of livestock products promotion, promotion of plant based diet, cage free farming, misleading meat and dairy denomination etc...



# The game changer in Europe ? The animal welfare concern – and the related communication (3/4)

- \* Only 6% of respondents in France, Spain, the United Kingdom and Germany declare themselves vegetarians or vegans.
- \* Flexitarians represent between 20% and 25% of the populations of the four countries studied: France, Germany, Spain and the United Kingdom.
- \* According to perception studies **Meat/dairy consumption is reduced in the name of health...**
- \* ...but a complete ban is decided on the basis of ethical considerations of animal welfare and the environment.



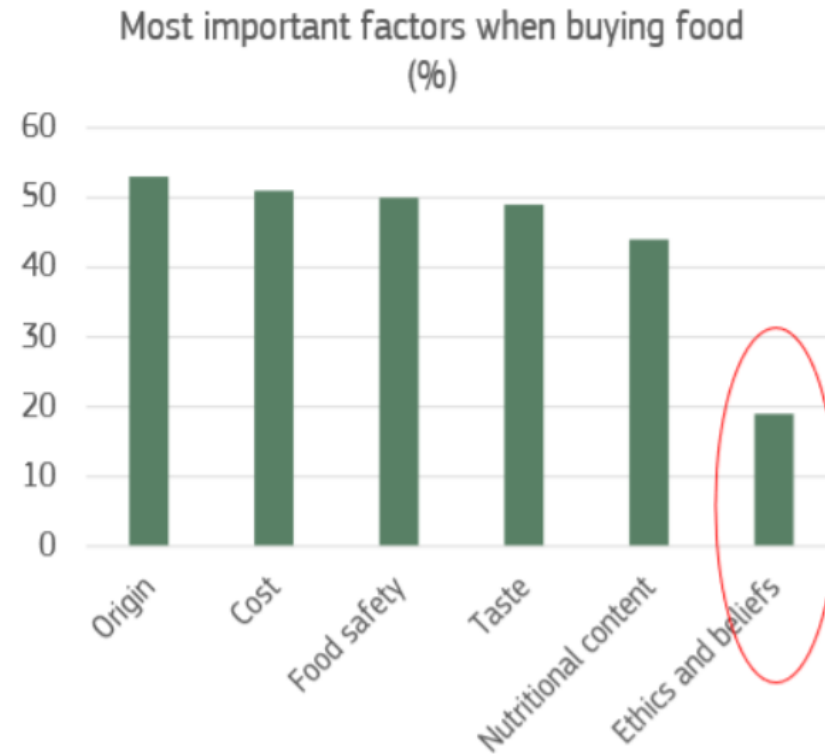


# The game changer in Europe ? The animal welfare concern – and the related communication (4/4)

\* According to a recent survey commissioned by the EFSA, when buying food, ethics and beliefs still appear as limited drivers.

\* However Ethical issues are on the rise.

\* **Conclusion: It is high time to engage actively in this debate!**



Source: Special Eurobarometer - April 2019 "Food safety in the EU"  
Survey requested by the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA), based on a list of 15 food safety-related topics  
<http://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/press/news/190607>

# Understanding the animal welfare question from a communication perspective

## \*Part 1: *The challenges of consumers' perception ...*



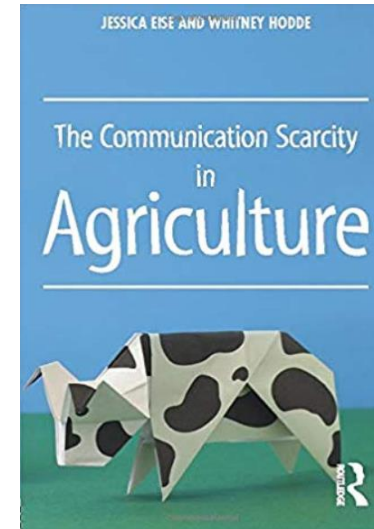
# Why is that so hard to make our voice heard? (1/6)

## \* **A demographic concern:**

\* European farmers are a rural, rather homogenous and older group when compared to the average population.

\* One third (32%) of farm managers in the EU were 65 years of age or more. Only 11% of farm managers in the EU were young farmers under the age of 40 years. The farming profession is dominated by men, with only about three in ten (29%) EU farm managers being women.

\* Harder to get connections with the general media, to have a community of online influencers and well-established ambassadors.





# Why is that so hard to make our voice heard? (1/6)

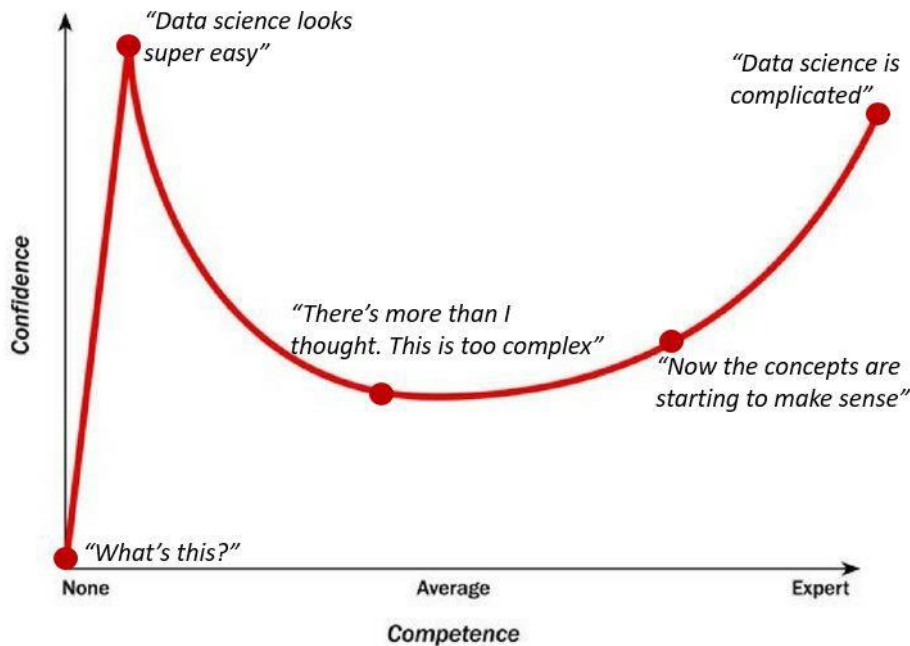
- \* At the opposite end, the “vegan trend” seems to attract more women, young people (under 35 years of age), urban populations.
- \* **A symbolic opposition between two parallel cultures/groups that don't have much interaction besides social media/media.**
- \* **Conclusion: 1) we should pay great attention to WHO is emitting our messages to speak to those consumers  
2) We should consider this gap in most of our communications**



## Why is it so hard to make our voice heard? (2/6)

\* **A problem of cognition:** « I know food therefore I know how it is produced »

*Dunning-Kruger effect in Data science*



\* Conclusion: Campaigns that are attacking the competence or answering directly to critics won't be efficient as they will reinforce convictions.

\* Campaigns that will be too simple or too emotional will be considered « propaganda ».

\* **It is a better option to show the complexity of the discussion**

\* **Conclusion:** Use carefully the concept of « fake news »

## Why is it so hard to make our voice heard? (2/6)

\* Meat/dairy products are not neutral in terms of value and symbolically.

\* Current criticism of meat and milk products is in fact quite old: the Puritans of the 18th century were already trying to remove these products from their diet.

\* Today the non-consumption of meat is used as a marker of social distinction, a way of demonstrating one's ethics.

\* **Conclusion: Questioning ethics is a new dimension of agricultural communication, we are not used to it and we have to rethink our approach.**



**Frédéric Leroy**

@fleroy1974 Vous suit

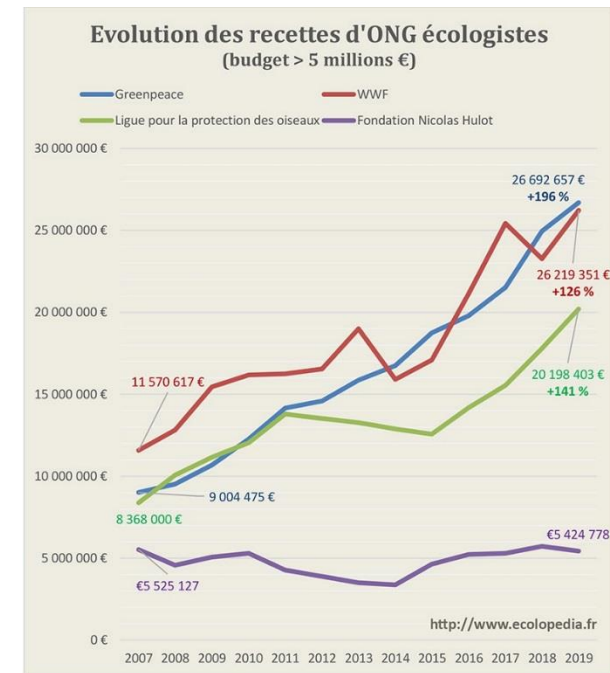
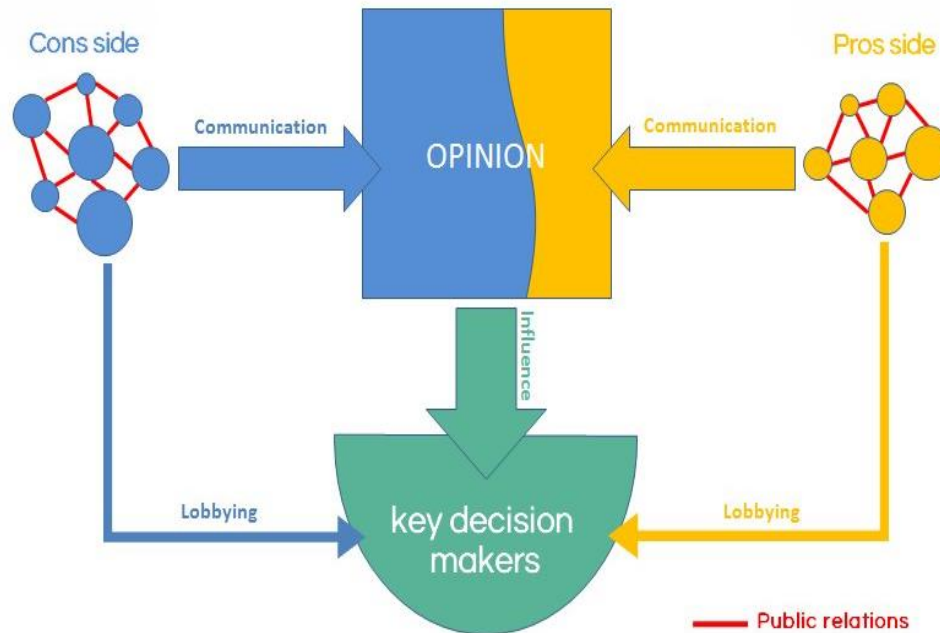
Exploring foodscapes. |

Animal source foods in ethical,  
#ALEPH2020: [aleph-2020.blog](http://aleph-2020.blog)



# Why is it so hard to make our voice heard? (3/6)

## \* A question of approach – direct lobbying vs. Indirect influence



\* The active use of communication is also a way to get financed and today those organisations have important funds and use advanced marketing strategies at EU level.

# Why is it so hard to make our voice heard? (3/6)

- \* The consumer journey – a traditional marketing approach



- \* Visuals more efficient than words...
- \* Use of emotive language engages the reader...

# Why is it so hard to make our voice heard? (4/6)

- \* **The “objectivization effect”** – “science is set when it comes to meat/dairy consumption”
- \* The use of marketing to promote one side of the debate: The Eat Lancet report





## Why is it so hard to make our voice heard? (4/6)

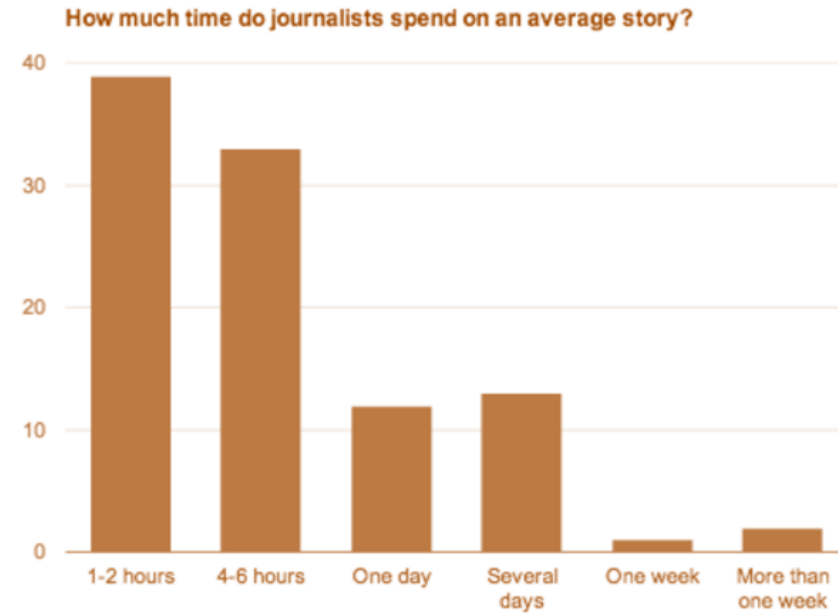
- \* A 47 pages report backed up by a powerful communication campaign - a growing trend
- \* The abstracts that are proposed are more radical and do not reflect the methodology/ the doubt present in the full report.
- \* In this kind of campaign, messages are tested within study groups to find the most effective concepts for the media/decision makers.
- \* A “wow” effect – so impressive and fast that you will agree without discussing it
- \* **A communication proposed at the same time in a different language on a different media channel. This required a lot of time and preparation!**



# Why is it so hard to make our voice heard? (5/6)

## \* A problem of approach with the media

- \* Complex/technical stories do not make good headlines.
- \* Stuck to the defence, forced to explain farming practices in a limited time with limited data
- \* Journalists in Brussels have limited contacts with livestock farmers/important turn over



Source: Media relations and Europe – from the journalist's perspective, APCO, 2008



# Why is it so hard to make our voice heard? (6/6)

## \* A problem with the understanding of the strategy

\* Experience at EU level shows that the “livestock free” promoters are well organised, well advised and follow consciously/unconsciously a precise agenda:

### \* The « salami tactic»

\* EAT lancet and WWF [“Meat guides”](#) : To move the consumption of meat from red to yellow and green (more sustainable).

### \* The generational strategy

\* Friday for future

\* **The refusal of debate** to prevent institutional and economic neutrality

### \* Veganizing the economy



Car and Driver  
@CARandDRIVER

To go fully vegan, @Tesla will have leather-free interiors in the Model 3 and upcoming Model Y: [crdrv.co/bROBJ80](https://crdrv.co/bROBJ80)



# Why is that so hard to make our voice heard? (6/6)

\* As a result very few individuals/organisations question the model that is promoted by the livestock sector as we tend to focus on answering critiques made to our different sectors:

\* A Vegan food system would create other problematic trade-offs, what would they be ?

\* Would Veganism guarantee less animal harm ?

\* A “livestock free society” means a society that relies on synthetic products, would it be an environmental/social gain ?

\* Would “Lab grown meat” have a better footprint than cattle in meadows ?

\* Would you be willing to stop having pets like cats/dogs because it is considered slavery by some vegan theorists?





The silver bullet does not exist ! Multiple actions are required

**\* Part 2 ...to challenging the perception”**

- \* Few best case practices from across the EU
- \* Presentation of the Meatthefacts Campaign



# Answering the demographic concern, challenging the dunning Kruger effect (1/2) - FRANCE

\* Through social Media...



Réponse à Rémi Gaillard d'un éleveur sur l'abattage

67K views • 1 year ago



VACHES A HUBLLOT, LA RÉALITÉ FACE A L214

52 k vues • il y a 4 mois

- \* More efficient than institutional communication
- \* Create farm influencers (invited in the media)

# Answering the demographic concern, challenging the dunning Kruger effect (2/2) - FRANCE

\* by phone !



Jérôme Regnault, Fanny Durand-Boschung et Olivier Coupery, producteurs en Ile-de-France, ont imaginé un service d'appel gratuit pour contacter un agriculteur.

© DR



# Avoiding the “objectivisation effect” (1/2) - BELGIUM

\* Supporting scientists and agronomists to set up in the debate

## Animal source foods in ethical, sustainable & healthy diets

A dynamic white paper - #ALEPH2020

ALEPH2020

ASFs and Livestock

Ethics

Planet

Health

Experts

### Concept: what is this website about?

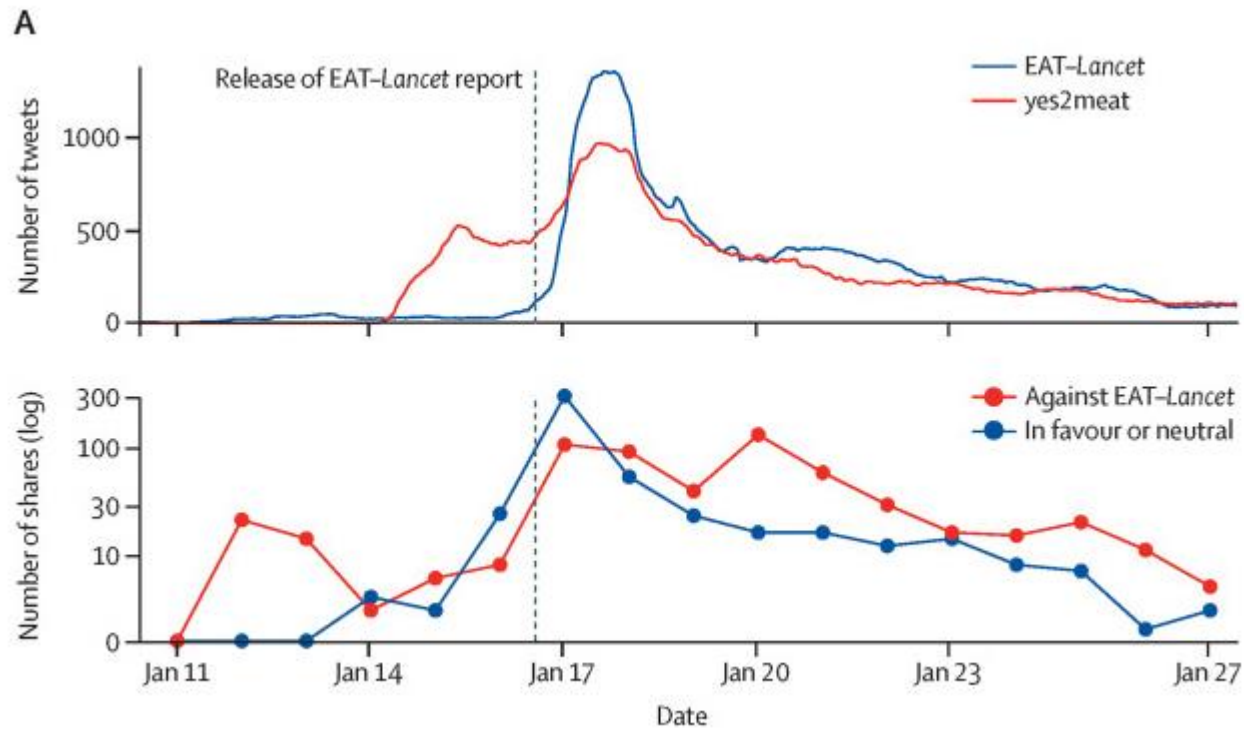


**The ALEPH2020 initiative** (Animal source foods and Livestock: Ethics, Planet, and Health) was launched at the end of 2020 by an international and interdisciplinary consortium of >30 scientific *experts*. The acronym refers to the first letter of the Proto-Canaanite alphabet 'Aleph', which later also morphed into the Greek 'Alpha' and Latin 'A'. Originally, the letter was derived from the West Semitic word for 'ox' depicted in a Proto-Sinaitic glyph, on its turn likely obtained from an Egyptian hieroglyph showing a bovine head. As such, it not only represented a vocal sound and scriptural element, but also notions of strength, vitality, fertility, and generosity. Throughout human pre-history and history, animals (either hunted or domesticated) and animal source foods (ASFs) have always held these connotations, as they were essential for survival and sustenance.



# Avoiding the “objectivisation effect” (2/2) – US

\* Developing communities: the case of the #yes2meat



# Working more closely with the Press (1/2) - Italy

\* Involving journalists – they know how to communicate/engage with the press!



HOME PAGE   SALUTE E NUTRIZIONE   AMBIENTE E SOSTENIBILITÀ   SICUREZZA ALIMENTARE   BENESSERE ANIMALE   ECONOMIA E SPRECO   EVOLUZIONE E CULTURA



**Carni e salumi: quanto ne sai davvero?**

Il modello zootecnico italiano è un esempio di sostenibilità in tutto il mondo. Per ribadire questo concetto, sempre più impo

<>



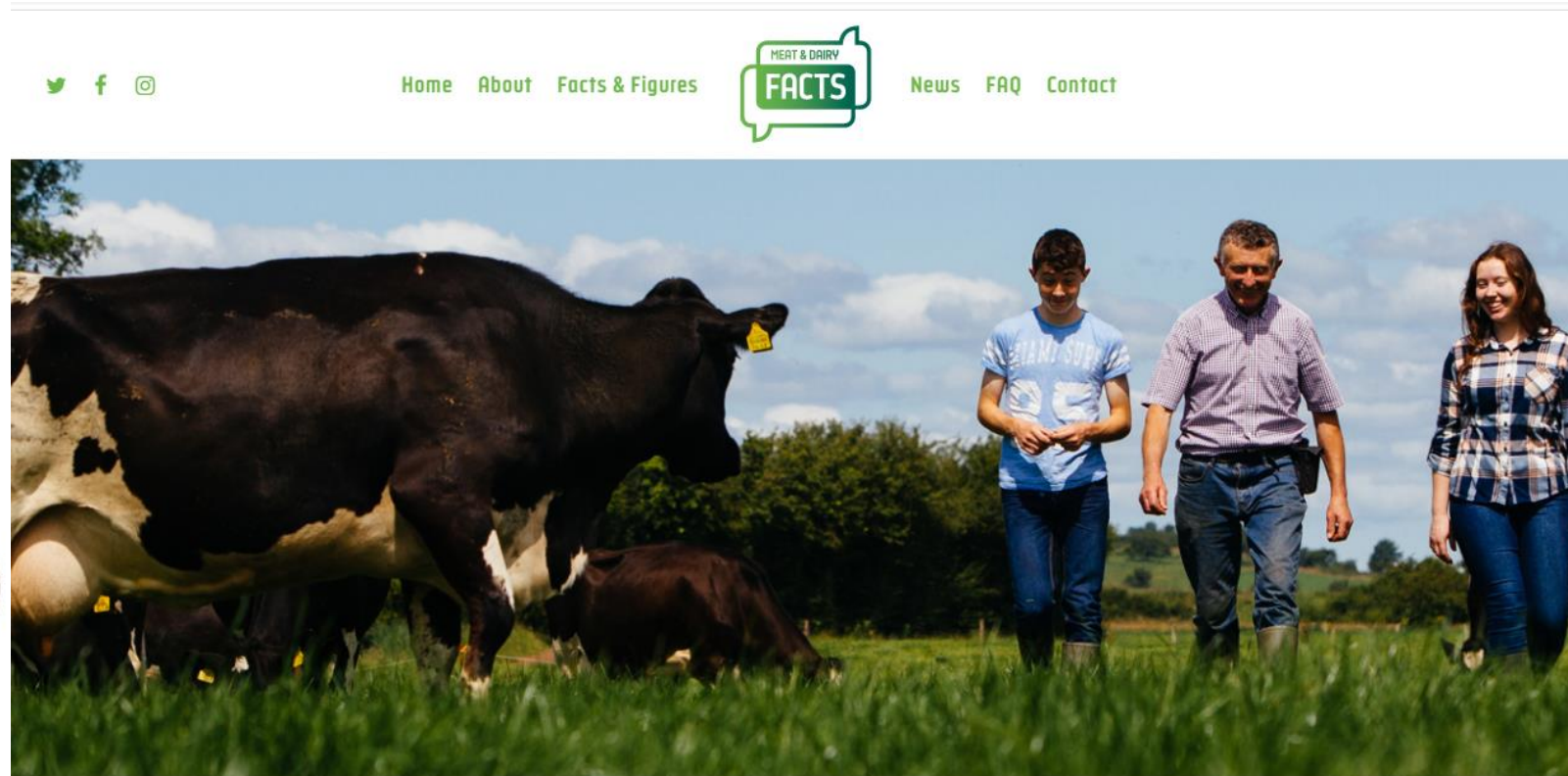
## Working more closely with the journalists (2/2)

- \* Press trips and open farms days – One of the best ways to create a real understanding





# Creating campaigns/networks to debunk misleading statements – Ireland



Welcome to





Questioning the vegan agenda: The meat the facts campaign – EU



# A collective (re)action - #Meatthefacts

- \* A year ago – first analysis of NGOs marketing strategy / willingness to replicate their approach to tell the other side of the EU livestock story.
- \* 11 EU based organisations accepted to join us in this project (participation involved financial/knowledge investment)
- \* Creating a strong and user-oriented web platform addressing the most popular myths around livestock (something missing at EU level)
- \* To back up this platform with a visual/emotional 360° communication campaign (NGO- style)



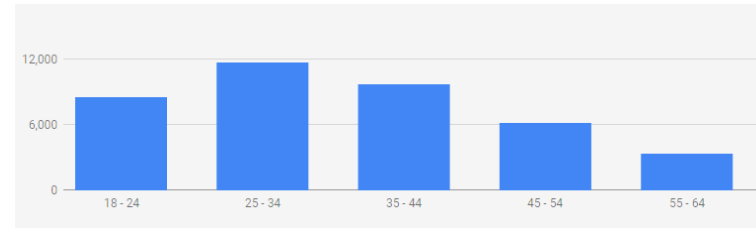
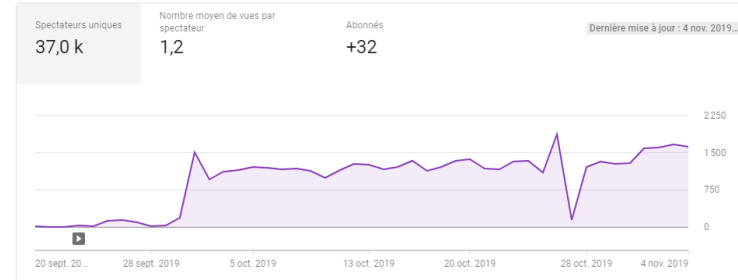
# Working on the emotion in a non aggressive manner - questioning the “vegan” paradigm





# Using online paid advert systems to reach new audiences and engage the debate

#MEATTHEFACTS





# Working with key decision makers in a different way



## FIRST-EVER #ELVDEBATES!

Join us for the first-ever European Livestock Voice Debate: *Is livestock really destroying the planet?*

**30 November 2020 from 2:00-3:15 PM** – The livestock sector is blamed for all sorts of ailments, from CO2 emissions to unsustainable meat production, a supposedly « unhealthy » food. Numerous calls have been issued to curb livestock farming, meat consumption, etc. As we move to a greener future with a stronger focus on health, it's time to examine both the pros and cons of livestock in a multifaceted debate.

Speakers:

- **Andrea Bertaglio**, Journalist, author of "In Difesa della carne" (In defence of meat)
- **Michael Scannell**, Deputy Director General, DG AGRI, European Commission
- Moderator : **Florence Ranson**, REDComms

Exchange with the speakers and Q&A with the audience



Organising flash actions in the same way as NGOs (and no traditional farming protest)





Creating a central hub to engage with everyone and group all EU initiatives

<https://meatthefacts.eu/>

ARE WE NOT SPEAKING YOUR LANGUAGE?

THESE NATIONAL INITIATIVES MIGHT BE ABLE TO HELP

 <p>UK</p>	 <p>Austria</p>	 <p>UK</p>	 <p>Italy</p>	 <p>Spain</p>
 <p>Italy</p>	 <p>Belgium</p>	 <p>Germany</p>	 <p>UK</p>	 <p>Germany</p>
 <p>Germany</p>	 <p>France</p>	 <p>Germany</p>	 <p>UK</p>	 <p>Ireland</p>
 <p>Portugal</p>	 <p>Switzerland</p>	 <p>Spain</p>	 <p>Finland</p>	 <p>Germany</p>
 <p>UK</p>	 <p>Netherlands</p>	 <p>Belgium</p>		

Being a referral point for the EU press when it comes to livestock ethical related issue – Speaking with one voice

## 'Climate Change' and 'Animal Welfare' cannot be reduced to simple slogans

DISCLAIMER: All opinions in this column reflect the views of the author(s), not of EURACTIV Media network.

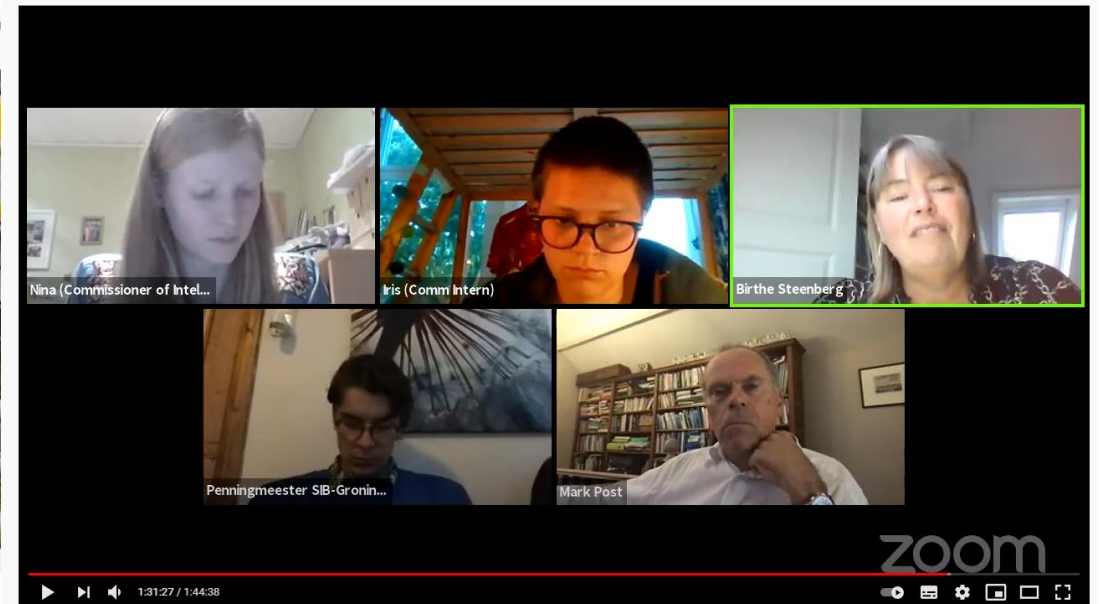
### Promoted content

By European Livestock Voice

26 sept. 2019 (updated: 5 n)



[European Livestock Voice]





# Test and prepare our messages on rising topics – most recent example with the meat denomination debate

**Ingredients:** mycoprotein (50%), wheat flour (with added calcium, iron, niacin & thiamine), water, vegetable oils (turnesol, rapeseed), rehydrated ground hen egg white, milk protein, natural flavourings, salt, spices and spice extract (black pepper, cayenne pepper, fenugreek, muscatel nut, black pepper extract, fennel extract, chilli extract), wheat gluten, wheat starch, yeast, firming agents: calcium chloride, calcium acetate; colouring: paprika extract; gelling agent: pecticin; rice flour.



*Ceci n'est pas un burger.*

Join the debate on social media using [#cecinestpasunsteak](#)

This campaign is powered by the following representative organisations of the livestock sector at EU level



AN INDUSTRY STRIVING TO BECOME MAINSTREAM  
DOES NOT NEED TO **MIMIC** EXISTING PRODUCTS!

Let's not become surrealistic and "call a spade a spade" [#cecinestpasunsteak](#)

52,429 views · 15 Oct 2020

15 7 SHARE SAVE ...

# Working in an open source/collaborative manner

- \* Once a document/visual/video is produced, it is shared with the whole community in a native format
- \* Our initiative now has a relay in Spain, Portugal and Italy. We collaborate with the Irish Meat and Dairy facts. Finland will join in 2021.

## MÁS DE LO QUE PARECE



## Conclusion – key learnings

- \* Livestock ethical issues are **communication concerns** that should be solved through communications
- \* A good communication campaign can be achieved with limited expenses
- \* We should **not be afraid of controversy**: better to frame the debate ourselves than ‘be framed.’
- \* Having precise/fact-based answers, questioning the model proposed by supporters of a “0 livestock Europe” is more efficient than emotional/direct answers
- \* We can theoretically rely on a **larger and more supportive community** – the livestock sector!
- \* Don’t hesitate to join the European livestock Voice initiative !







Thank you for your attention !

Name/Surname

Twitter Handle @

email



[www.copa-cogeca.eu](http://www.copa-cogeca.eu)